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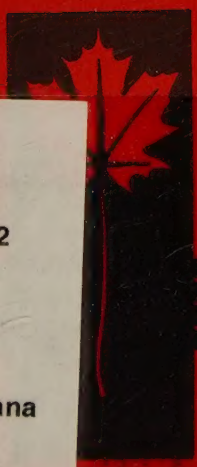

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Canadian POETRY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 8
No. 2 — December, 1944

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AN EPISTLE TO PATRONS

Though there is pleasure in poetic pains,
This melancholy truth, alas, remains,
That he who seeks to vend the nation's verse,
Unhelped by public or by privy purse,
Will see insolvency's pale silver frosts
Fall like a blight and kill him with their costs.
So is it now with us, who find, we fear,
Our deficit is nigh "one grand" a year —
A thousand dollars — and, except for friends
To keep the ship from lurching on its ends,
This queasy quarterly and all its freight
Of priceless poetry might yield to fate.
May a suggestion be put forth between us?
Lovers of verse can vie with great Maecenas
And come to poetry's most high defence
With the bright honour of munificence.
Many or few, no dollars will we shun —
One hundred, fifty, twenty-five, ten, one.
Cheques mailed to help the dear old C.P.M.
Will find us grateful. We shall welcome them.
P.S.
Kind contributions have come in thus far
From H. S. Alexander, F. I. Ker,
Two Southam brothers of the Southam Press,
And J. M. Gibbon, friends in our distress.
The present issue settled with the banks
Through their assistance; and we render thanks.

W.K.

QUARTERLY PRIZES

THE CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE is not in a position to pay contributors for work published. In lieu of such payment, the Advisory Committee on Awards decides, by mail vote, upon the three best poems in each number; and the authors of the winning poems are given small cash prizes.

PRIZES FOR POEMS IN SEPTEMBER NUMBER

First Prize for *Grey Nunnery,* by Ranulph Owens.
Second Prize for *Qui Ante Diem Periit,* by R. D. Harris.
Third Prize for *Beauty,* by Joy Tranter.

HONOURABLE MENTION

Who Will Know Then?, by Murray Bonnycastle.
Lament for a Young Airman, by Edith Bainbridge.
Autumn in Wartime, by Gilean Douglas.

FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

THE Canadian Authors' Association established the Canadian Poetry Magazine to stimulate the production of fine verse in Canada. The publication of the preceding seven volumes was largely made possible through the generosity of Foundation Supporters, whose gifts supplemented the Magazine's earnings from subscriptions and advertisements.

SUPPORTERS FOR VOLUME 8

H. S. Alexander, Hamilton; J. Murray Gibbon, Montreal; F. H. Ker, Hamilton; Poetry Group, Toronto Branch, Canadian Authors' Association. Others who have indicated their interest by making donations are Dr. Beaumont S. Cornell, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Mrs. M. MacLeod, Winnipeg.

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Time and again a new subscriber will write "I have needed this Magazine for years," or, "I didn't know we had anything like this in Canada."

Please show this copy to your friends.

"You must try to keep the Canadian Poetry Magazine going, for it is one of the best things we have." — Lord Tweedsmuir (John Buchan).

Canadian POETRY MAGAZINE

VOL. 8, No. 2 DECEMBER, 1944

EDITOR: Watson Kirkconnell. ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Amabel King, LEO COX.

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EDITORIAL

ON TONE COLOUR

This is the first of a series of editorial articles on specific phases of poetic technique. The underlying assumption of the series is that poetry, like music or painting, is a highly complicated art. A mere sense of afflatus on the part of beginners—"fire in each eye and papers in each hand"—is no more a proof of the poetic value of their creation than is the unalloyed ecstacy of the adolescent improviser of harmony at the piano or the rapture of the Grade VI pupil over the chromatic blobs of his class in water-colours. The other arts recognize the importance of cultivating innate ability by rigorous training. The poet likewise is made as well as born.

It should also be clearly understood from the beginning that while separate phases of poetic technique, such as imagery, rhythm and tone colour, can be isolated for purposes of analysis, yet all of these have their full significance only in the harmonious co-ordination of all such means in the appropriate outworking of a poetic theme.

Concentration on one element alone is no more an adequate conception of poetry than a study of the blood-stream would be an adequate summing up of all human physiology. Bones and muscles, nerves and glands, brains and viscera, all have their part to play in the living organism.

When, however, for purposes of study, we make such an arbitrary isolation of tone colour, we shall find in it one of the most important factors in the prosodic equation. A quotation from Robert Louis Stevenson ("On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature") will give a general idea of its place in literary art: Each phrase in literature is built of sounds, as each phrase in music consists of notes. One sound suggests, echoes, demands, and harmonizes with another; and the art of rightly using these concordances is the final art in literature. It used to be a piece of good advice to all young writers to avoid alliteration; and the advice was sound in so far as it prevented daubing. None the less for all that was it abominable nonsense, and the mere raving of the blindest of the blind who will not see. The beauty of the contents of a phrase, or of a sentence, depends implicitly upon alliteration and upon assonance. The vowel demands to be repeated; the consonant demands to be repeated; and both cry aloud to be perpetually varied. You may follow the adventures of a letter through any passage that has particularly pleased you; find it, perhaps, denied awhile, to tantalize the ear; find it again fired at you in a whole broadside; or find it passing into congenerous sounds, one liquid or labial melting away into another."

Prerequisite to the highest employment of this device is a study of the vowels and consonants of the language. There are fundamental differences of quality between the harshness of the flat "a" and the smoothness of the long "o" and "u". There are comparable differences between gutturals and liquids, stops and continuants, and voiced and unvoiced

consonants. Yet many versifiers have not made even the most elementary classification of these fundamental elements of tone, with their varying effects on the auditory and emotional quality of the poetic line. A conspicuous case of the use of tone devices for effective contrast occurs in Tennyson's "Passing of Arthur":

The bare black cliffs clang'd round him as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels —
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

In the weaving of sounds into a poetic "incantation," several types of sound patterns are employed.

One of the simplest is the repetition of important words and phrases for the express purpose of strengthening their importance and their musical effect:

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!

Rhyme itself is a tone colour device, and one so familiar as to need no illustration here. The same may be said of alliteration, except that the more obvious type — the alliteration of stressed syllables — may be supplemented by the "submerged alliteration" of unstressed syllables with stressed syllables or with one another. Thus in Tennyson's line,

The league-long roller thundering on the reef,

the "surface alliteration" of *roller* and *reef* is reinforced by submerged alliteration from *thundering.*

One of the subtlest and most pervasive devices is assonance, the repetition of the same vowel sound in combination with varying consonants. This was one of the major

elements in Celtic prosody, and occurs in all great poetry, both ancient and modern. A palpable example from Tennyson is in the line

The myriad scream of wheeling ocean-fowl,

where the repeated "e" sound echoes the cry of the gulls. Another is in Milton's lines in *Comus:*

But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder.

Here the thrice-repeated flat "a" of the second line leads up to the tremendous double outburst of alliteration plus-assonance that immediately follows.

A less frequent artifice is that of consonance — the repetition of the same consonants with different vowels:

Would a GhoST not rise at the strange GueST's hand?

A common variant of this is inverted consonance, where the consonants are repeated in the reverse order, as with *tunes* and *note* in Milton's lines:

Sings darkling and in shadiest covert hid
TuNes her NocTurNal NoTe.

In this instance, the word *nocturnal* presents both consonants in a position of central equilibrium. An even more intricate example is Coleridge's phrase, *a damsel with a dulcimer,* where the consonant-sounds of "d," "m," "s," and "l" are all repeated in the second noun, but in a different order.

Some modern poets, such as W. H. Auden, have deliberately employed consonance as a substitute for rhyme:

Not smiling at queen over the glass RIM
Nor making gunpowder in the top ROOM;
Not swooping at the surface still like GULLS
But with prolonged drowning shall develop GILLS.

This sort of thing is an interesting experimental attempt

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF NOVA SCOTIA

to extend the tonal range of English prosody; but its value as a uniform principle of line-linkage is still debatable.

At any rate, the serious student of poetry will be aware of all these factors in creating or enriching the tonality of verse. In practice, their general principles are as old as Sappho; and their theoretical analysis was cited two thousand years ago by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. The fantastic eccentricity of some verse in our own time lies often in attempting to use some one device in isolation instead of employing all relevant devices to achieve an artistic end with a maximum of power and beauty.

Readers and practitioners alike may find new fascination in taking a few lines of poetry and analysing their tonal intricacies. Consider, for example, four lines from a sonnet by Byron:

> *And when thy sons to fetters are consigned,*
> *To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,*
> *Their country conquers with their martyrdom,*
> *And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.*

The rhymes are dubious, but there are three interesting cases of consonance in the first three lines and several instances of assonance and alliteration to be sought out.

POEMS

EPISODE

I can remember little that you said,
But I remember how the candles spilled
Small pools of gold upon the polished floor;
I can remember that the room was filled
With peace; a branch tapped boldly overhead,
A curious wind kept sniffing at the door.

I can remember little how you looked —
Your lean, dark face, quiet eyes like brown brook-water;
Long-fingered hands; your elbow closely crooked
Around a tale, — "Swineherd and king's fair daughter!"
"Their love was strong," your firm lips sang the words.
Our love was frail, its season all too brief;
I watch, alone, the bright, indifferent birds
Weaving their nests; I watch the falling leaf,
The punctual snow, the frost that comes and lingers,
Creeping through cracks, driving its icy splinter
Into the stinging flesh! O, Memory's fingers
Probe at the heart, these long, dark days of Winter;
Open the healing wound with careless hand,
While the smug hour-glass sifts its fateful sand!

Pauline Havard.

WHITE WINGS

I saw them in the cold bright winter air:
The long-winged sea-gulls flying, tipping the waves
With their white wings; and I thought of death, and I said:
"There is no death in this; there is no life
In this, — it is the essence and the spirit
Of That which Is, the Thought in me which knows,
The Hand in darkness, silence, the flame blowing,

The Question that is given, and the Answer
Unspoken in the Void . . ."
And then once more
The whiteness of their wings, flashing and falling,
Over the waves, the blue and brilliant air;
And then again the thought: there is no death
In this, nor life, nor ending, nor beginning; —
Only the ceaseless motion, the eternal
Pulse in the wind, the flame invisible
Blowing forever over the waves, the Breath
Beating in me, the sea-gulls and the waves
Again,
And yet again. . . .

George Cardinal Le Gros.

THE SQUAMISH

Sea was as smooth as the Lost Lagoon
All afternoon.
When the ducks flipped over
And followed exploring bills,
As the willing water wiped out the last tail-ripple,
I could see them run
On the ocean's pebble-paved floor,
Guzzling morsels cured in brine.
But towards evening windows began to rattle.
Doors slammed.
Gulls were restless.
They screamed at one another
And nervously warned the one
That sat all day on a post, like Simeon Stylites,
To hurry right home to his nest
Lest he be storm-stayed.
It was lowering weather:
Oh! there went a feather on the wind:
The post was deserted.

"What's up?" I asked
The man with an armful of wood.
"A squamish," he said,
And went for another load
To fill up the wood-box.
The weirdest thing was happening to the water
When I looked.
It was rolling past, arranged in giant steps
Leading up from the south to the north,
From low to high,
Like a moving liquid escalator
Wide as all Howe Sound,
And every step was edged
With a line of white foam-paint, the style these days
Of dim-outs, black-outs, blitzes, and such things.
There was a deep-toned humming —
Not harsh like the voice of a bomber —
As though the bass stops had been pulled out
On Nature's harmonium.
The racing steps grew higher, higher still:
It seemed to me in the gloom
That they were reversing the usual order of things,
When someone, hurrying, climbs the escalator,
For the rising steps were trying to climb the cliff
Where our house sat.
(But where was the sense in that?
The trick had been tried for a thousand, thousand years
But nothing came of it —
Nor ever will.)

All night they left their worn-off paint on the shore
In a two-foot band of foam.
But when morning came we looked at a miracle,
For the sun poured down on a sea like a lily pool
Except for that tell-tale bubbly line near the cliffs.
The clouds were gone and so was the escalator;
And feathered Simeon sat like a gull on the post
As though he had never broken his vow and flown.
One could hardly tell,
Looking now at the dreaming Sound,
That a squamish, last night, had had a rendezvous
With the flowing tide
(Each firm as of old to yield no whit to the other)
And rushed down an escalator
Toward fate at the foot of the stair.
The evidence goes to show it was a stormy meeting.
And so, today, I was not surprised to find
That the tide is out, and the squamish gone away.

"Gone, and good riddance!" said the man at the kitchen door,
With an armful of wood for the empty box.
"She's a ring-tailed snorter, she is,
And no mistake."

"Who is?" I asked, both eyes on the dimpling sea.

"The squamish," said he,
"That devil of a wind, the squamish!"

Clara Hopper.

THE GA-GIT

The Ga-git who haunts in the night-time!
The Ga-git, the ghost of the Haidas!
Tell then the tale of the Ga-git.

Return of the Queen Charlotte Island Braves

How they have worked, these woodpeckers,

Toiled with their brothers on logs
That are hollowed and charred and
Half-filled with water.
Hissing, red-hot, the stones fell
Widening the cedar.
Now with their bow-jutting craft
Full sixty feet long and able to carry nine men
With provisions till springtime,
The twin brothers are starting.

They think of the Enchanted Woman

Never shall I forget the stormy hour
When first we found her stranded on the shore,
Groaning with pain.
I caught her spirit in a tube of bone
And gave it back to her complete and new.
Her speech must now be watched,
For female otters thus entice a brave,
Till he becomes a beast, roaming the woods.
Perhaps this Red Witch is an evil one.
Yet she said, "Ki-we," word of woman kind,
Not "Kou-we," word of the Otter Tribe.

The craft is seized by rapids

See! One it beats against the sharp-toothed rock,
Entangling the other, binding feet and arms
Till he can move no more.
He laughs! Old Sel-sats laughs (Neptune)
Within his deep abode,
As when a hunter in the thicket's maze
Calls to the cruel-fanged dogs with roaring glee,
And back they come, the rapids, keen for praise.

The old mother grieves for the loss of a son

Was this because the law was once defied,
And the twins kept, when shamans urged their death?
I warned him of Wi-git, the most high, the Raven,

He who is trickster, upsetting canoes,
Who turns to a snag-stick, a frog or a schooner.
A chad a di kune, Woe to my beloved!

Red Witch, widow of drowned man, refuses to marry his twin

I will not carry bones upon my back
Nor will I cut my hair, nor streak my face,
Or in your lodge to serve you endlessly,
To wait upon your mother and her kin
Until my beauty withers like a leaf.

The widow plots her escape, also the theft of a prized shield

It is dark, so dark near the hunter's lodge.
Listen for one who glides close to the sea,
And on the silver sand traces a sign.
Sinister as the night is the sign.
Listen for one who calls upon the Tset-saut gods.
Transparent are they as the pale moonbeam,
And cunning are they as the winged hawk
And full of ancient strength.
They come — they come! The swift-winged come!
Escape — escape! Help me escape tonight!

The Twin Brother swears revenge

Indeed our family is greatly wronged.
She had no right, no right to creep away,
Stealing the Great Bear Copper from its place.
I swear by Sha-la-na himself (Great Spirit of Good)
To find this woman and to bring her back
Where all may witness her disgraceful death.

A Ghost enters the council room

What Indian brave is this, with blue-green flesh
Criss-crossed by stripes of rust?
His raven hair not bound by pin or braid,
The hands and feet convulsed in clawlike shapes.
A fog surrounds his form.
How strange his features and his nails are long.
Surely he is a ghost who comes to haunt.

The apparition speaks to the braves

Across the sea, I've followed you, Anitlus,
Far from from the fire blazing
Where the wild goat is grazing on Mount Elias.
Though Red Witch erred in stealing the Great Copper,
Yet none shall find her, or take revenge
While I am guarding.

Terror spreads through the camp. They are helpless against the power of the supernatural

I hear a deafening wind beat on the waves,
A wind that moans about the halls of Death.
A mounted Ga-git, riding his white horse!
Watch how he glides a man's height from the ground.
Quick! We must build our bonfires again
And fill the air with screams until he leaves.
Who is this demon-wretch who taints our stores?

Have you not heard that when a man half-drowned
Lies on the beach, a spirit enters him,
And bent on mischief through the night he rides?
Hermia Harris Fraser.

LEGEND

Thinking upon the agony of France,
I saw a fearful beauty on her brow;
Eyes fever-famine hollowed, pale lips compressed,
Hair, dank with blood and sweat, in matted strands.
Then, as I pictured her, heroic still,
Unwavering in her faith that help was near,
That her deliverance would surely come,
I chanced to look up at the midnight sky;
And, yielding to the lead of fancy's whim
Which there sought answer to my questioning,
I strove to trace that maze of starry shapes:
Cassiopeia seated in her chair,

Winged Pegasus, and Perseus swift of foot,
Andromeda with fettered hands up-raised.
— Swiftly the old, bright story came to mind,
One told in troublous times of the ancient world;
And, like the soughing in an ocean shell
Tide-borne from cavernous depths, there reached my ear
The faint tones of a voice from far away . . .

All night I heard the crash and boom of waves
Beating against the promontory's base;
No other sound, unless the peevish cry
Of a wakeful sea-bird startled from her niche.
Only the darkness of the sea lay spread
Before me, and the distant shining of the stars,
Where, hung low near the sea's dusk-purple rim,
A yet uncharted constellation glimmered.
Slowly it sank; and I, abandoned there,
In cruel shackles, fast bound to the rock,
Prayed every god in turn to loose my chains,
Or overwhelm me with a climbing billow.
Only the ceaseless surge of waters sounded,
Now lessening, now receding from the cliff.
But, as the dawn mist rose, came drowsed forgetfulness . . .

Sunrise! And a golden flash of wings!
Glitter of golden armour, glint of sword!
The whole sea heaved as in an earthquake throe.
Then the vast, shapeless, evil thing arose.
Blackness closed upon me, while a clangour
Resounded in fierce challenge; and it seemed
As though unnumbered armies, dreadful powers,
Contended, sea and air commingled wildly. . . .
I dreamed this tortured world reeled back to chaos.
Silence. . . . A loud shout rang, "Andromeda!
"Look up! The monstrous thing is dead!
"The iron-clanking scales sink in the sea!

"Know me for Perseus, sent on the lightning's path.
"Before earth, sea, or crag grew towards their birth
"This was the conflict fought, the conflict won,
"And set out in the everlasting stars."

The far voice died away; but I, intent
On following the vision, spoke aloud:
Your legend shall live on, Andromeda,
Like starlight in the dark of midnight skies.

France, lovely, martyred France, the dawn appears!

Florence Westacott.

WATER

Black water,
Deep in lake ice;
White water,
Foam-frothed on the rapids.

Water imprisoned
And water in thunder;
Embanked water
Drowning the villages;
Crispèd spring water
And brine from the sea.

Stone-mirrored water,
Dark rusty deeps
Of clear rivulets;
Lure of the azure
Cast down from heaven
Inverted within;
Nearer and nearer,
Pebble black-shadowed,
Eddying heavily
Down to rock quiet. . .

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Blanched mist
Over lake water;
Green trouble of ponds.

Tempests, slow rains
And drops on the panes.
Children's wet feet
On the moist sands
Of still streams.
Women at wells —
Fountain to fountain.
And the thirst quenching
At bottle and jug
Cool in green hiding. . . .
In time of harvest.

Water that sings in us,
Watery music,
Lure and enchantment,
Enticement of water.

As though ever since
Separation from earth
In first days
Of the world,
It has harboured
Resentment
At losing its ancient
Elemental command.

Eternal menace of water,
A fear everlasting,
Despite the high rainbow
After the flood.

Attraction of water,
Lure everlasting —
Foe immemorial

We trust and despise;
Passive and conquered,
Like a woman aloof.

There is water of marshes,
Of stagnant savannahs
And mud will of rains.

And there is the ocean,
Master of all. . .
And water pellucid
Of streams being born.

O limpid word water,
O underground sources,
O springs in our hearts,
O tears in our eyes!

Since the cleft of the waters
Sundering sky and the earth,
There have been ever,
Up-welling fountains
And swallowed savannahs.

All those deep waters —
What ways have they taken?
Whence their deep surge?

This springing of waters,
Up-rising, unending,
Unconscious, up-tending. . .
This sea and its flood!

Restrainer of marshes,
Preserver of sea,
What well could we draw from
If there were no sea?

Translated by Leo Cox from the French of Anne Hébert, by kind permission of the author and her publishers, Les Editions de l'Arbre, Montreal.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The door banged shut and shadows
Closed in on the quiet room;
The coroner's steps clomped stairward
Like a dusty drum's dull boom;
Plaintive the staircase whispered,
And softly the shadows sighed,
Steeping the night with music —
Mad music that rose and died.

The door banged shut and shadows
Climbed huge on the oak settee;
"Here," said the doorknob grayly,
"They laughed in their soon-sped glee";
"Here," said the worn red footstool,
"They knelt for a moment's prayer";
"Here," said the floor-lamp dimly,
"I blazed on her corn-silk hair."

The dark room glimmered briefly
As the lightning flared without;
"They might," said the fireplace skeptic,
"Have grown to be fat and stout";
"Here," said the window whitely,
"Their kiss reflects in the glass";
"Here," said the tired old sofa,
"They sat when they turned on the gas."

Alfred W. Purdy.

THE AFGHAN

Through the long zero halflight of winter
When even the hearth log grows chill,
The war mother climbs to the garret
To unravel frayed wool by the sill.

Only filaments left of the muffler
Her father had worn as a sling
For his arm that a Boer sabre mangled
While he fought to relieve Mafeking.

The drab khaki socks, whose bright saga
No history book can abridge,
Of a husband whose death-song was "Victory!"
For the valiant who won Vimy Ridge.

Deep scented with thyme and dried anise,
The turtle-neck sweater Tad wore,
Never hearing that high call to Dunkirk
To greet Death at the head of his Corps.

The toque with the trim scarlet tassel
She knitted when David began
To cut "figure eights," little dreaming
Of his last blackout hours at Oran.

She salvages all the moths left her
Of the gauntlets that guided her Jim
Over ski trails, before far Bizerte
Had bugled his funeral hymn.

She unravels and knits. Her gnarled fingers
Now fashion an afghan to hold
Tattered dreams that the moths left to shield her
From the cold, from the lonely cold.

Gordon LeClaire.

MEMO FROM A FREIGHTER

U Boat, U Boat stalking me,
You are the flower that opens in the night,
The white sweet sickly bloom of death;
You are the formless face that follows me
Into the trackless depths of sleep,
Swaying soundless with the rolling waves,
Whispering destruction with your lipless mouth;
You are the eyeless watcher in the deadly sea,
Hunting me through the darkness to the dawn,
Searching with electric fingers for my throat,
Waiting to hurl destruction through my steel walls,
To stab me with enormous blows,
Flinging me helpless to the boiling depths,
Pressing me down into the cold green breathless dark,
Leaving me there, a mangled hulk,
With only the waves to mark my resting place.

But if you find me so before the dawn,
And sink me with your deadly shafts,
There will be ten more such as I
To take my place; and you will wither before the sunset comes,
Torn by the slim steel terriers of the sea,
Plunging in tattered hideous death
To lie beside me on the ocean floor:
And none will weep above your sepulchre,
And there will be no more to take your place.

Dick Diespecker.

PARTISANS

So read the text of snow, interpret
The cold fields in their crazy cloaking,
Explain the winter sky that lowers out of season
Persecuting April for no reason.
Dare to prophecy spring
Sooth the frozen buds with sun
And send the sweet flowing sap of bravery
To the thin growing points awakened cruelly
To meet destruction.

History's erratic seasons toughen
And teach how to keep a smooth metallic surface,
Proceed with caution, confide in no one
Sharpen biological cunning, tell us
When to burrow back to the sure position
After a January thaw when
Like animals we wake out of season
And dig ourselves from warm holes of sleep
Out of the safe dark to make a false sally.

Now with fourfold witness of no permanence
We ignore all seasons, read weather in the sky,
Tell fortunes by comrades' faces, chart maps
By our burnt granaries and wrecked bridges,
Shoulder the guns, disperse to hiding places
Behind the enemy lines, live like the bullet
In one direction swift and unerring.

Miriam Waddington.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Here in this quiet room
The shadows grow and merge
Into the growing dusk.
So we have come, by separate, devious paths
To this oasis in our fevered journey.

Your quiet hands weave out a poem,
Built on the measured rhythm of the needles —
Your quiet hands, two islands now of paleness,
In the gentle dusk, weaving the music
Of ivory touched on ivory.

The long soft strands of the dark sleepy colour
Enmesh me round like tangling water weeds
In this lagoon of sleepy dark content,
Drawing me down resistless, and I drown
With scented water lapping at my face.

I have come here for this;
All the winds my inconstant soul can blow
Can do no more than flicker the white flame,
Your steady soul that glows like a pure candle
On some dark altar where I kneel alone.

Robert D. Harris.

TO ASIL

In memory of an Arabian stallion — one of the famous Van Leer Refugee Performing Horses.

O Asil! Fairest of thy race,
Where hast thou fled this night?
Thy proud dark eye and noble grace
Are lost to human sight;
But surely now, thy silver soul,
The flame that fed thy might,

Hath found at last its final goal,
And shineth there more bright!

Far hast thou fled from cracking whips
That stung thy satin hide,
And far from harsh and cruel lips
That pained thy royal pride:
Now dost thou walk in peaceful lanes,
Where only angels roam?
Or dost thou play on grassy plains,
Deep in thy heavenly home?

Perhaps thou sleepest for awhile
Beside thy Maker's throne,
And dreamest of the mighty Nile
That banked thy forbears' home:
God made thy rare and perfect form,
All robed in angel's skin,
And sent thee here one quiet morn,
To dwell with human kin.

Beyond compare He made thy face,
And blessed it with His light;
Thy limbs He made as fine as lace,
Thine eyes as black as night!
Then on thy neck he gently laid,
A pure white silken mane —
And, this to match, He flawless made
Thy tail — a glorious train!

He breathed His breath into thy lungs,
And set thy heart to beat;
And last upon thy brow He hung
A star — His work complete!
Thou wert so splendid, proud, and rich,
I see thee even yet:
Fore'er in Memory's fondest niche
Thou'lt prance — I'll not forget!

Ruth Waddington.

AS THE SONG PASSES

Blow snows
your white enchanted flowers.
Summer has torn her glory from the trees
and marked her passing hours
with little sighs;
sighs that rustle leaves across the street
like scattered songs
of a ci-devant prima donna. . . .

Grey skies
be gentle with your winds across the hills
and touch the streets so
with an artist's hands.
We grieve,
leaning our heads upon the window sill
hearing where Autumn stands
a dying voice. . . .

Fall softly snows
in your first lovely fashion.
Our tearless sorrow
pleads a mellowing.
So in our gardens
let your white dreams shake an echoing
of the lost song.

And on our window-panes
in frost-frail shower
leave us a crystal memory
of every flower
that passed. . . .

K. Jarvis.

NIGHT OF WAR

O God, blow out that lamp, the moon,
So it may never shine
Again upon this shadowed lake
And in these eyes of mine.

This silver silence — break it up
And throw the pieces high,
So I may never sit and hear
The still, white hours go by.

For such a night went down the tide
Of love. Dear God, I know
That beauty is acomforting —
But let your stars burn low.

Gilean Douglas.

SAILORS ALSO WAIT

Our love shall bound the leagues
Of weary waves and burn
More tender. Time intrigues
And distance blends in one
Those essences of being
Through which our lives, alone,
Complete their cycle-dreaming.

Sweetheart, for you I yearn;
Our love shall be fulfilled.
Through days and nights I turn
Of toil and danger, thrilled
By memory. Your caress,
Your presence deeply limned,
Most clear and sweet, I bless.
Love's stint of joy is brimmed.

A. M. Kirkpatrick.

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF NOVA SCOTIA

WHAT IF I SHOULD NOT KNOW

What if a sign should come and I not see, my lord,
While labouring in some quiet garden carefully.
Should never sense that, meekly budded, bloomed, and dead
Its one rose — vanished, and I not know it shed.
Through very blindness that foreruns the dark for me,
What if I should not see?

What if a call should come and I not hear, my lord,
While tramping corridors crowded and hot with fear,
Or if a wind should sing into the thoroughfare
What if I, earnest listening for a trumpet-blare,
Should never know it was your voice thus cool and clear?
What if I should not hear?

What if the time should come and I not know, my lord,
Not feel the cup held to my parted tired lips — so —
Waiting and fain and parched there, burning for its kiss;
What if I, longing through a night of lives for this,
Should never grasp the silver bowl and drain it slow?
What if I should not know?

Reba M. Hudson.

THE LONELY ISLAND

Some day we shall return
To the quiet cove,
Drawn by the dim mystery
Of bracken and hemlock grove.

What other boat may have touched there
No trace will tell;
The beach will reveal no footstep
By a single crushed shell.

The island will receive us
Gladly as before,

As if it had been waiting
For this one keel on the shore.

The high hours of sunshine
We shall spend as we please
Clambering among uprooted
Trunks of giant trees.

As the sun slants westward
And the birds fall still
We shall stray back to the beach
Wondering at the chill.

The fern and hemlock placidly
Will watch us go,
That green islands know.
Still guarding the secret
Sweetheart, for you I yearn;

Lionel Stevenson.

AUTUMN

Weep not for summer! For had fair summer lingered,
Bereft we would have been of autumn loveliness:
This strange, sad season of the year, when trees,
Moaning and swaying in the wind, let Nature have its way
Until the last brown leaf has fluttered to the ground.

Patiently they stand
Awaiting spring, whose first warm sun brings forth their tiny buds.
So this is life! they say;
Stretch wide their branches and drink deep of rain,
Until their leaves are strong and darkly green.

Proudly they stand,
Their leaves made lovely by the song of birds,

Spending their youth in service!
Pitting their strength against the summer storm.
Some, weaker than the rest, lie broken,
Learning too late that lasting good is gained
By bending to a Higher Power.

And so they reach maturity, weak and strong alike,
Flaunting their courage in brilliant shades
Of orange and red and brown. Their very souls
Shine forth for all the world to see.

Quietly they stand,
And we shall marvel at their autumn beauty
Until the last brown leaf
Has fluttered to the ground.

Grace Elton Hemingway.

PLANE CRASH

(To P/O Keith Mayhew Joyce, killed August 1st, 1944)

Not this body,
Broken under the wreckage
Like wheat in the mill;
Not dust unto dust he holds,
But the spirit loosed
From earth's continuum,
From sidereal space,
Into the far corners of mystery,
Flying;
Into the sun of knowledge,
Racing;
Into the ineffable,
Soaring;
Searching eternity
In all its fullness.

Not this body
But the wind in his hand.

Marcia Harris.

APPLE TREES

Apple trees in springtime:
  Brides in trailing white
Waltzing down the orchards
  In the arms of night.

Apple trees in summer:
  Women in their prime,
Bearing ruddy children,
  Fruitful and sublime.

Apple trees in autumn:
  Wantons in the rain
Strewing lavish favors
  Down each vivid lane.

Apple trees in winter:
  Witches in the snow
Huddled with their memories
  In the afterglow.

Helen E. Middleton.

THE STAR-CHILD

Child of a child from a far-off land
That was cradled in a star,
Its cry rang out on the desolate sand
Where the dunes of longings are.

In a wistful cloud of the dawn it came,
Like the lotus a-float on the stream,
As the night-wind passed its breathes a name
And rocks the child in dream.

Patricia Benton Mednikoff.

HOAR FROST

Wreathed in the fronds of their ashen glory,
Jewelled in coral, carved in snow,
The trees in their soft grace stand so quiet,
As if some mystery held them so.

Down the avenues of beauty
The silver vistas lure far away;
And all the strange outdoors is petalled
In the great white rose of day.

Frail world abloom with ghost-blown blossoms,
Where no bud unfolds its mystical fruit;
Where awed by a vision almost holy,
The spirit of loveliness is mute.

Minnie M. Mitchell.

FLASHBACK

You came to me along the sun-white sand,
calling my name with laughter on your lips.
It was a day for high adventuring.

Like children measuring a new delight
we raced the lazy surf on eager feet,
and felt with flexing toes the ebb and flow,
the even furrowed silt, the water's weight
on knees, on thighs. Then quitting useless legs
we swam far out with sure exultant strokes
into an opalescent solitude.

You beat me to the buoy that marks the shoal,
reached out and drew me, breathless, to your side.
And there we clung and kissed . . . and laughed aloud
that love should find us in so strange a place.

At last, reluctantly, we swam ashore
to sprawl upon the beach in tired content,
two water creatures cast up by the sea.
Your skin was smooth and brown, your teeth flashed white
with every smile, your voice was tenderness.
It was enough to lie and watch your face,
your eyes, so swift to kindle in response.

Holding a cigarette between your lips,
idly you picked a stone to strike a match.
It flared!

A spear of lightning cut the sky
tracing the ragged edges of the clouds.
Re-echoed thunder boomed like distant guns
as desolation chanted in the wind
and crested fury crashed along the shore,
and you . . . . . .
and you were back in Singapore.

Helen Ball.

TO ONE WHO RETURNS NOT

You come not with the night nor with the morn,
You come not with the ever-changing years.
May brings you not, with the jade spears of corn,
Nor silver-misted June, with falling tears.
The wistful buds upon the golden rose
Break not for you, although you loved them so;
The year's recurrent cycle comes and goes
In beauty, and you do not even know.
When shrill November makes the wild birds dumb
I feel your lips on mine at close of day;
But when I waken, you have stolen away.
Come once again, forlornly I entreat.
Only the dawn on grey, reluctant feet
Stands by my side, and still you do not come.

Margot Osborn.

FOOT-NOTE FOR THE FUTURE

TRAVELLER ON THE PRAIRIES

Here is no rock to build on, gaunt Voyageur,
Here you must be ever wayfarer, wanderer,
This black wind blows from the edge of no human sea.

Put out your hand to lean, no tree leans to you;
Throw your parched body in the withered grass,
No bush holds comfort;
Gaze at the level distance as you will,
No one has gone before, no one is following,
Nothing is there but the drift of unremitting years
And the sand sifting into your footprints, and
The coyote fears.

Alien in an empty world, unwanted,
Unbefriended,
Bowed head beating into the wind that sears,
O Voyageur, beware of the wind that sears,
Put out no roots, or,
If it freshens, maybe, if it wills,
It will blow you, slipping, slipping,
Toes vainly gripping at the earth's bark,
Along the edge of the world out into the dark.

P. E. Rashley.

REVIEWS OF POEMS

Collected Poems. By E. J. PRATT. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada. 1944. 314 pp. $3.00.

The stature of a mountain is realized only as we catch a vista of its full scope against the sky. Those of us who for a quarter-century have hailed with delight each of Ned Pratt's new volumes, like successive cliffs and ramparts of the range, now gaze with admiring eyes at the solid totality of his output.

The style is pre-eminently masculine. There is a strength of line, a force of narrative, an impelling vigour of presentation rivalled by few poets today in the English-speaking world. This is notably the case with his epic tales of the sea — from "The Cachalot", down through "The Titanic" and "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", to that great Channel episode, "Dunkirk"; yet the more vivid passages of "Brébeuf and His Brethren" display an even more intense and controlled power, instinct with the moving associations of the great Tradition:

But not in these was the valour or stamina lodged . . .
But in the sound of invisible trumpets blowing
Around two slabs of board, right-angled, hammered
By Roman nails and hung on a Jewish hill.

Another marked quality in Pratt's work is his erudition. This is a characteristic that has grown upon him increasingly with the years. In one of his earliest poems, "Come not the Seasons Here," he shows a lyric warmth and simplicity; but the academic mind has pushed those qualities more and more completely into the background. In their place has come the scholar's delight over exuberant word-coinages — "salicaceous jaguars," "uniformitarian types" and "uxoricidal will" — or in rare terms, such as "ballista," "mesas," "cas-

carilla," "taro," "kauri" and "melanotic." Behind his longer poems lies an incredible wealth of research. Biology and palaeontology are drawn upon for "The Great Feud"; historical sources are ransacked for "Brébeuf and His Brethren"; and even "The Witches' Brew" calls for an exhaustive roll-call of hard liquors. Pratt has put as much brain-work into his poetry as have Ezra Pound and T S. Eliot, yet in his case there is no hint of snobbery or pedantry. A gargantuan gusto of intellect wields all this erudition with easy mastery. But no one would suggest that his work was "simple, sensuous and passionate."

Sometimes his manner is in danger of degenerating into a mannerism. No other Canadian poet could be so easily parodied. Yet at his best his range of learning adds greatly to his imaginative power, as, for example, in his closing description of the iceberg that wrecked the *Titanic:*

> *Silent, composed, ringed by its icy broods,*
> *The gray shape with the palaeolithic face*
> *Was still the master of the longitudes.*

It is this strong intellectuality, moreover, that turns his humour into satire of an incisive kind. Even in his most Rabelaisian moods, it is the play of mind that is impressive rather than any rollicking sense of the comical. Canadian poetry has all too often lacked content. Through all of Pratt's work, viewed now in its completeness, there appear the imposing lineaments of a mature intellect.

W.K.

Gray Acres. By Lillian Collier Gray. Carillon Poetry Chap-Book. The Crucible Press, Toronto. 1944. 32 pp.

Sometimes, when a poet thinks of a good title, memory replies: "No,—you've done that one before." Mrs. Gray has not allowed herself to be discouraged by any such reply,

PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF NOVA SCOTIA

and in this little collection of twenty-seven poems two are called "Creation." One of them contains one of the best stanzas in the book:

> *"And where a hill-top touched a cloud,*
> *A wind-flower turned a wondering face,*
> *For all the winds of all the hills*
> *Were wild with singing in that place."*

Wonder at the beauty of the world and pity for the unnecessary suffering of its inhabitants would seem to be the keynote of this writer's work.

V.L.H.

Last Poems. By Anna Hempstead Branch. Toronto: Farrar and Rinehart, Inc. 1944. Pp. xii+71. $2.50.

The last gleanings of an author's left-over manuscripts deserve to be published posthumously only if some precious life blood of a master spirit is thereby preserved. These thirty-odd poems are said by the publisher to represent Anna Hempstead Branch at the zenith of her creative ability. Certainly they have merit, for this Connecticut poet writes with a notable grace about many things that have filled her "full of rich astonishment." With obvious delight she mentions apples and honey and lobsters and mathematics, but is more deeply stirred by the music of angelic things, and perhaps the most memorable of these late verses are the two visionary communications from her dead mother. Yet the moods and themes range from the grotesque fancies of "The Wife of Midas," the impassioned vision of "The Poet and His Song," and the rapture of "The Dancer," down to a vignette of childhood in "Six Years Old, Going to a Lady's" — a song of innocence. The song-of-experience touch is perceptible in the lovely "All Night," and (with greater passion) in "The Voice." Anna Branch's kinship with

Blake is, in fact, unmistakable, though Ridgely Torrence's illuminating Foreward associates her rather with Emily Brontë and Christina Rossetti. Like all three she is most powerfully articulate when showing what dreams her soul perceives.

R.McK.W.

The Technique of Poetry. By Joan Buckley. Published by the author, Langley Prairie, B.C. 1944. 63 pp. $1.00.

This handbook of "hints on verse-writing" would be exceedingly useful to beginners. The subtler phases of craftsmanship are omitted, but there are hundreds of simple, practical suggestions. The book is particularly serviceable in its treatment of numerous lyric patterns. The style is colloquial and would be admirably suited to a high school poetry club, intent on learning how to write.

Errors are rare. The early Britons, however, spoke Old Welsh and not Anglo-Saxon (p. 22). The exact opposite of the choriamb (p. 20) is not the paeon but the antispast; and there are not two forms of the paeon but four (EXquisitely, exTERminate, inconCLUsive, aquamarINE). These exotic forms (and the author might have mentioned the bacchic, the cretic, the tribrach, the epitrite, the proceleusmatic, the dochmiac, and still others) are really alien to English and can almost always be resolved into simpler elements. Miss Buckley wisely devotes herself almost entirely to the main tradition of English verse.

W.K.

Poems of Life. By Dorothy Sproule. Privately printed. Undated. 36 pp.

An introduction by the Rev. Lloyd C. Douglas, M.A., D.D., LL.D., Litt.D., characterizes thus this volume of religious poems: "The faith and hope that motivate them

disclose a tranquil assurance, beyond the need of passionate argument or documented proofs." The popular novelist therefore warmly commends them to "sincere questors *(sic)* of life's spiritual imperatives."

W.K.

Twisted Gold. By R. G. Lovell. Toronto: The Crucible Press. Carillon Poetry Chap-Book. 1944. 20 pp.

This is Mr. Lovell's second slender volume. While it is written with evident sincerity and thoughtfulness, the craftsmanship is still somewhat defective. Such would-be rhymes as *dawn-born* (used twice), *wind-dines, fence-trench,* and *aspires-inspires* are to be deprecated; and stanza-patterns that have been clearly established in the early part of a poem (e.g. "An April Night") should not be suddenly abandoned in mid-stream.

W.K.

The Saskatchewan Poetry Book, 1944-45. Regina: The Saskatchewan Poetry Society. 1944. 36 pp.

This is the ninth annual anthology issued by this enterprising group. It contains 57 poems written by 34 poets, with roughly one page to each poet. There is a commendable tendency to make poetry out of the life of the prairies, either that of today, as in John E. Nixon's "Western Plowman" and Enid M. Pickel's "Home Holiday," or that of the vanishing Red Man, as in Margot Osborn's "Always the Melting Moon" and Ella M. Davis's "The Call of the Ground." Special mention might be made of John E. Nixon's "At Hazebruck," Kathleen Jarvis's "Summer Comes Back," Nina S. Berg's "Rain," and Genevieve Bartole's "The Spirit of Earth." Andrew Graham's "The Mocker" is wittily ingenious. The first and last pages of the chap-book have poems that are almost first class. Mac Moir's opening quatrain in "Here in the Dark Hut" has haunting beauty,

but the fifth line falters badly. Gwen Campbell's "See Not, and Yet Believe" is well planned and well sustained, and then breaks rhythm in the final line.

W.K.

My Rosary of Song. By ALICE FRY. Privately printed. Undated. Unpriced. 9 pp.

The best thing in this little blue chap-book is a thoughtful Petrarchan sonnet entitled "The Minister." Current idiom lends a curious twist to an innocent description of the soul of a deceased poet:

His spirit, freed
From earthly bonds, sings on the beam that leads
To rarer air.

W.K.

A new book of poetry by a young author in the Royal Canadian Air Force —

"THE ENCHANTED ECHO"
by Alfred W. Purdy

Ranging in subject from pure fantasy to a mildly philosophic vein, this volume is an addition to any poetry lover's collection.
Copies may be obtained from The Clarke & Stuart Co., Ltd., 550 Seymour Street, Vancouver, B.C., on receipt of $1.00 which covers all costs. Postpaid to any address.

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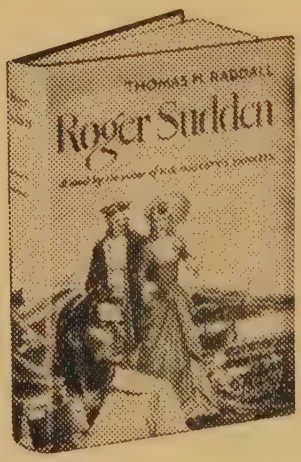

ROGER SUDDEN

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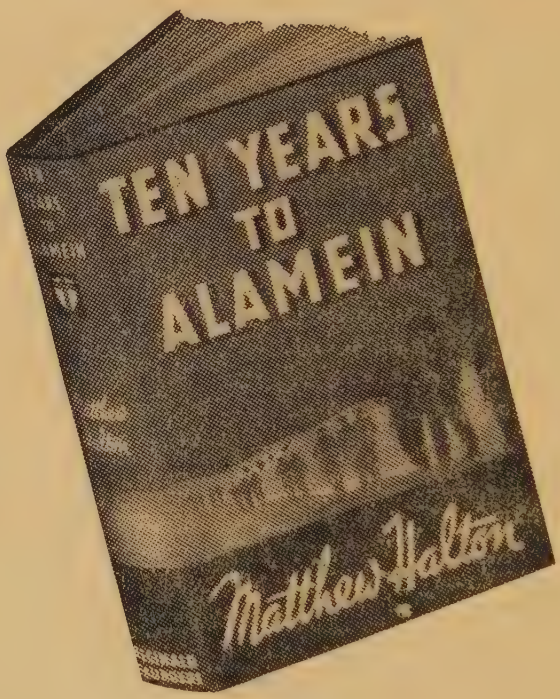

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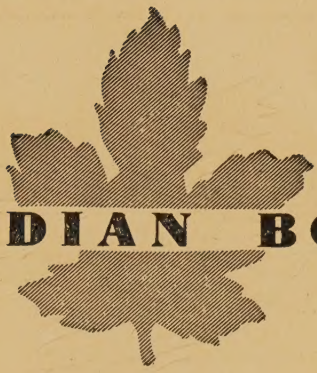

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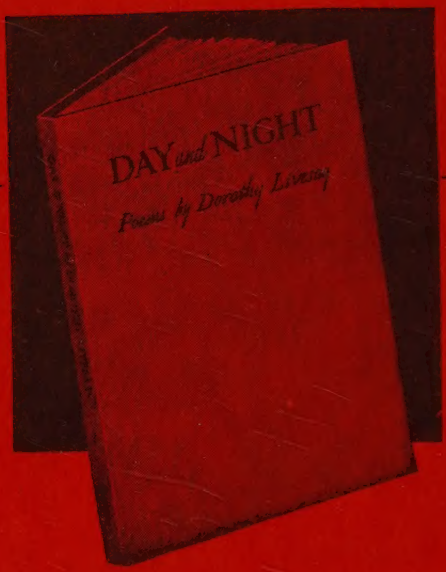

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